

To the Honorable Claudia Wilken,

I am a parent with two children impacted by the College Athlete NIL Litigation, Case No. 4:20-cv-03919, and I am grateful for the opportunity to address the issue of the Settlement. I fully understand that this should be coming from my son, but please allow me to share a personal story from a parent perspective. There are tens of thousands just like ours.

My daughter played volleyball at Oregon State and thus is a party to the settlement, and her interests have been represented. My son's interests have not been. He is a freshman at George Mason and a member of the Men's Volleyball team. He, or his teammates, will be cut if the roster limits are not grandfathered in. He is lucky to be a member of an incredible program, whose coach is building a brotherhood. There is NO REASON to shatter that volleyball family, other than the laziness of the powerful parties and their willingness to sacrifice the regular athletes to benefit themselves. We are not powerful people and we believe in the concepts of basic fairness and justice; those necessitate the grandfathering of the student-athletes who have worked endless hours and earned these opportunities. To have them taken away so the rich can become richer violates every concept of fairness.

My son is one of tens of thousands. His high school career was terribly impacted, through a twist of fate, by covid. In his case, a second year was ended by a broken arm. Thus, despite a solid work ethic and being first team All-State, his recruiting was slowed and he luckily found a spot as a walk on. The sport of Mens' Volleyball is the fastest growing sport for high school boys, yet this will all but force future athletes to turn away. When my son committed, no roster limits existed. The rules of the game have changed under this group and this violates basic fairness. As a high school history teacher I have taught for thirty years that, as Dr. King said, the arc of history bends toward justice. Cutting these athletes now is NOT justice.

I understand that to many, this is a minor issue that young adults should be able to handle. Compared to the problems faced by many, that is a fair point. But to my son, and tens of thousands of others, this is a life changing experience and they will be deprived of it for no clear reason other than the NCAA's desire to be right and the lawyers' desire for their imminent payday. The NCAA will eventually get their protections and the lawyers will see their millions. But what damage will happen to tens of thousands of student athletes who have worked for years - not in the spotlight, but for the true love of sport - to have this cut short or totally denied? THESE are the very athletes who should be at the center of protection - the ones who will never make money off this, but those who carry schools. Had you seen Mason play Penn State last weekend, you'd see that.

I appreciate that you are giving this thought and consideration. I am sure there are thousands of these letters and I know you cannot read them all. I hope someone - anyone - sees this as the plea for justice for these students. I am a mother - I have driven the late nights, done the laundry, soothed the tears from the losses - for many years. My son, and the others, deserve to go as far as their work and skill can take them. It violates all American sense of fairness to allow big business to end that instead. We are a strong country and can craft a solution that helps these students through a phase in. ***Please do the right thing and reject this settlement unless it protects the athletes that have already earned these spots.***

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,  
Mary Lopez  
Mount Prospect, Illinois

